

100 YEARS OF CONSERVATION AND PUBLIC SERVICE ON THE ROUTT NATIONAL FOREST

The Early History of Forest Reserves and National Forests that formed the Routt National Forest by Mary Peterson, Forest Supervisor

2005 marks the 100th anniversary of conservation and public service for the Forest Service nationally! The Routt National Forest has also been the result of a long and colorful history in the last 100+ years! Over the next year, I'd like to share with you some of this great history of the Routt National Forest in a series of articles to celebrate our Centennial.

The Routt National Forest is comprised of the dramatic and beautiful Park, Gore, Medicine Bow, Elkhead, and Flat Tops Mountain Ranges. Fortunately for us today, the beauty and resources of these mountain ranges were recognized by early conservation leaders and were set aside as forest reserves, national forests, and a national park. Over the last 100+ years, the current Routt National Forest experienced several boundary and name changes. Following is a brief reconstruction of those changes.

The current Routt National Forest was produced from the entire Park Range Forest Reserve and portions of the Medicine Bow, Sierra Madre, and White River Plateau Forest Reserves, established respectively in 1905, 1902, 1906, and 1891. By an Act of Congress approved March 4, 1907, the forest reserves were renamed "national forests", thus resulting in the creation of the Park Range, Medicine Bow, Sierra Madre, and White River National Forests. Portions of the current Routt National Forest contained portions of these four "early" national forests as well as portions of the Hayden, Colorado, and Arapaho National Forests, and Rocky Mountain National Park.

The Park Range, Hayden, and Sierra Madre National Forests

On June 25, 1908, the Park Range National Forest was proclaimed the Routt National Forest by President Theodore Roosevelt. The gross area of the Park Range Forest Reserve at that time was 757,116 acres. It included part of the Bears Ears country; excluded Little Snake River, Crane Park, Whiskey Park and Big Red Park; excluded the south end of the Gore Range west of the heads of Green and Service Creeks and south of T.2N.; and

included the area in North and Middle Parks on a line approximately due south of Pearl, CO. In 1907, President Roosevelt issued a second proclamation that enlarged the Park Range NF to 1,133,330 acres, adding the Little Snake Country, Hahn's Peak Basin, the Lower Big Creek and Mad Creek areas, and the Green, Service, and Silver Creek drainages. The headquarters of the Park Range Reserve were in Kremmling, CO until August, 1907 when they were moved to Steamboat Springs, CO.

The Hayden National Forest was established on the same date from the entire Sierra Madre National Forest and part of the Park Range National Forest. In 1929 Herbert Hoover dismantled the Hayden NF. The Colorado portion (Encampment River and Big Creek watersheds) became part of the Routt NF and the Wyoming portion was added to the Medicine Bow National Forest (Hayden Ranger District).

The Medicine Bow, Colorado, Arapaho, and White River National Forests and Rocky Mountain National Park

The original boundary of the Medicine Bow Forest Reserve was about two million acres. To the north, it included most of the current Laramie and Brush Creek Ranger Districts, both part of the current Medicine Bow NF located in Wyoming, and the south boundary extended south into Colorado to Estes Park, and included portions of the Parks Ranger District of the Routt NF, the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests, the Colorado State Forest, and Rocky Mountain National Park.

In 1908, the Medicine Bow National Forest was divided into two National Forests. The Colorado portion became the Medicine Bow National Forest (and some was transferred to the Pike NF), and the Wyoming portion became the Cheyenne National Forest. In 1910, these Forests went through another name change. In Colorado, the southern portion of the Medicine Bow NF was renamed the Colorado NF. In Wyoming, the Cheyenne NF was renamed the Medicine Bow NF.

The Colorado National Forest went through a series of boundary adjustments, including transferring portions of it to Rocky Mountain National Park in 1914 and 1917, adding land from the Pike National Forest in 1917, adding land from Rocky Mountain National Park in 1924 and 1926, and finally, in 1930 Herbert Hoover again added to the Routt NF by transferring land from the Colorado and Arapaho National Forests south of

the Wyoming-Colorado border, west of the Medicine Bow mountains summit, and north of the Continental Divide (the lands east of North Park).

The Routt National Forest went through another series of boundary changes from 1930 through 1954. In 1930 lands were added from the Arapaho NF and Colorado NF. (In 1932, the Colorado NF was renamed the Roosevelt NF.) In 1934, the Forest Service made a land trade with the State of Colorado and lands along the eastern edge of North Park were eliminated from the Routt NF to form the Colorado State Forest. In 1946 a portion of the Routt NF was transferred to the Arapaho NF. And in 1954, land (much of the current Yampa Ranger District) was added to the Routt NF from the White River NF. Numerous other times, boundaries of the Routt NF were adjusted to conform to surveys, as a result of land trades, or as a result of executive orders.

Since 1954, there have been additional modifications to the boundaries of the Routt National Forest, done primarily through land exchanges with private landowners and the State of Colorado. Today, the Routt National Forest contains 1.125 million net acres and serves the public and cares for our natural resources from three ranger districts—Yampa (in Yampa), Hahn's Peak/Bears Ears (Steamboat Springs), and Parks (Walden)—and a co-located office with the BLM in Kremmling, CO. The headquarters office for the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests and Thunder Basin National Grassland is located in Laramie, Wyoming.

Sources: *Establishment and Modification of National Forest Boundaries, A Chronological Record (1891-1973)*, Compiled in the USDA Forest Service Division of Engineering, Washington, D.C., October 1973; and *History of the Routt National Forest (1905-1972)*.